

# Theories in audience research



Communication as a complex process which is text have both an explicit and an implicit agenda. (Ruddock, 2001). According to Ruddock, persuasion is achieved not only through information but also through controlling how people make sense of information as nowadays mass media were persuasive on so far as they offered audiences seductive ‘ knowledge positions’ that made sense of a chaotic world. (Ruddock, 2001, p. 222).

Stuart Hall argue that messages have a ‘ complex structure of dominance’ because at each stage they are, ‘imprinted’ by institutional power relations. (Hall, 1980). Furthermore, in a particular stages a message only can be received at recognizable or appropriate stage where the message is to be used or understood at least somewhat against the grain. (Hall, 1980). This means that power relations at the point to production, will loosely fit those at the point of consumption. (Hall, 1980). In this way, the communication circuit is also a circuit which reproduces a pattern of domination. (Hall, 1980). Hall theory is ideological only and media is powerful when audiences encode from it.

There are three challenges of encoding and decoding, Hall argued that (i) meaning is not simply fixed or determined by the sender (ii) the message is never transparent (iii) the audience is not a passive recipient of meaning. (Hall 1973). According to Hall, encoding and decoding is conventional model of communication to be found within mass communications research. This model moves in a linear fashion from the ‘ sender’ through the ‘ message’ to the ‘ receiver’. (RED: 253). According to this model, the sender creates the message and fixes its meaning, which can only be transparently when communicated to the recipient. Hall theory on communication process is

system can distort message which receiver might not getting the message they want to or expect (RED: 253). On the other hand, Hall are more on interested on the different way audiences generate and react from the message rather than discover the meaning. (RED: 253). The example implies in Hall theory are the sender of information will never will be perceived by the target audience in the way they expect because of the chain of discourse. Furthermore, when we recognize that these circumstances will result in messages being imprinted by institutional power-relations as they pass through these stages which we will realize that a message cannot be transparent, because there can be no 'raw' presentation of any information. (Hall, 1973). Besides, this reasons also extend to the moment of consumption and distribution which is Uses and Gratification the theory states that consumers are not a passive audience but an active recipients of meaning. (Hall, 1973). On the other hand, the decoding of messages is a complex process which making sense by audience and it will shaped by the imprints of reception, social and economic relations and structures of understanding before any kind of practice or consciousness can be happen. (Hall, 1973). Besides, consumers are for both which is receivers and as a source to understanding of a message. The description as a 'lack of fit' between the ' encoders' as producers and ' decoders' as a consumers is an unpredictability because of the codes offered by mass media through conveyed messages to receiver can be interpreted in three ways which is through a dominant reading where the receiver accepts and reproduces the code. (Hall, 1973). For a negotiated reading, normally the code is accepted but partly only shared thus an oppositional reading is the receiver understands the reading but rejects the code. (Hall, 1973). According to Hall

notes, “ hierarchically organized into dominant or preferred meanings” (p. 513), some knowledge become institutionalized because there is a preferred reading that is imprinted by a social order (institutional/political/ideological). (Hall, 1973). He argues that although we have polysemy, or multiple meanings, we do not have pluralism. This will result in some messages from the media becoming commonsense constructs, as we enforce certain semantic domains and” rule items into and out of their appropriate meaning-sets” (p. 514). When consumers are faced with messages, and make sense of them within the hegemony of dominant code, they will reproduce already dominant definitions. (Hall, 1973).

Hall were insert a semiotic paradigm into a social framework which to clearing the way for both which is textualist and ethnographic work. (Hall, 1973). Hall’s essay has been important to the study of media which is fieldwork like David Morley. He has proceeded model has been criticized for his model which is sender, message and receiver. (Agosto de, 2006) According to Agosto, it is a concentration on the level of message exchange and for the absence of a structured conception of the different moments as a complex structure of relations. (Agosto de, 2006).

On Hall’s theory, his has own militant, position, where he insists that the ‘ preferred reading’ is undoubtedly a property of the text which means can be identified on the analysis itself. (Hall 1994). In my opinion, if Hall is right on the textual analysis there are still has many important place in audience work rather than many subsequent scholars have recognized it. However, we cannot deny that textual analysis by dissolving the text into its readings or contextual uses, the question still remains as to the nature of the text that <https://assignbuster.com/theories-in-audience-research/>

we should analyze. (Agosto de, 2006) At one time, under the influence of structuralist theories of language and meaning (de Saussure 1974; Hall 1981) it seemed obvious that content analysis could be of little help, because of the way in which it disaggregates texts into their atomized constituent parts and according to structuralism to gives them their meanings. (Agosto de, 2006) Besides, as we know from many studies of viewing practices people from the whole actually do not consume whole texts on television even though they still do in cinema. (Agosto de, 2006) In plus, in the age of the remote control device, they watch cannibalized schedules of their own construction, as they jump from one bit of programming to another which the structural relations within any one programme will be irrelevant, except in that particular sub-category of viewing in which people will sit down and watch the their favourite programmes. (Agosto de, 2006).

According to David Morley's research involving Nationwide has become an important study when concerning audiences. Morley outlined three hypothetical position which the reader might occupy dominant reading whereas the reader shares the programmes 'code' Code means systems of values, attitudes, beliefs and assumptions and fully accepts by the programmes as to be 'preferred reading' Furthermore, negotiated reading is the reader partially shares the programmes code and its preferred reading, however they modify it which reflects their position and interest. (Hall, 1973). Oppositional reading is where the reader does not share the programme's code and completely rejects the preferred reading, which brings an alternative frame of interpretation. (Hall, 1973). A further,

fundamental problem about matters of interpretation is raised by Condit (1989) and Caragee (1990) who both argue that many audience scholars have exaggerated the extent of the polysemy of meanings of media texts and ignored the limits placed by texts themselves on the process of interpretation. (Agosto de, 2006). Their argument – that most texts have meanings which are perfectly clear to the majority of their readers – who only differ in their evaluation of them, takes us back to another unresolved issue raised long ago by John Corner (1981). This concerns the need to disentangle the elements of comprehension and evaluation which are intertwined in the Encoding or Decoding model. This takes into deep water, as Hall's original (1973) argument was that, in any society characterized by significant cultural divisions, and thus a 'systematically distorted' system of communication (Habermas 1970) the elements of comprehension and evaluation will inevitably be intertwined with some kinds of interpretations dismissed by more powerful others as merely 'misunderstandings'. (Agosto de, 2006) The unresolved difficulty here is that the price of analytical clarity, if we attempt to too neatly divide matters of interpretation and evaluation, may be to disassemble the empirical conjunction of these issues and thus to evacuate from the model the very questions of cultural power which it was designed to address (Hall, 1973). Yet further important questions remain about the status of another of the model's central categories that of the 'oppositional reading'. It may well be that the original model, in its search for overtly political forms of opposition to the culturally dominant order, overvalues 'oppositional' rather than 'negotiated' decodings. (Agosto de, 2006) Moreover, it is by no means clear that an audience's refusal to even engage with a text sufficiently to make any decoding of it and its irrelevance

to their concerns which is the position of many people in the UK, in relation to much of contemporary news and current affairs programming is less of an oppositional reading than one which is at least sufficiently engaged by a text to bother to `disagree` with it. (Agosto de, 2006). As Dominique Pasquier (2003) argues, the `indifferent audience` may be one of the key issues for contemporary audience research. (Agosto de, 2006)

Sociologist David Morley argues that `members of a given subculture will tend to share a cultural orientation towards decoding messages in particular ways. (Agosto de, 2006) Their individual “ readings” of messages will be framed by shared cultural formations and practices`. In conclusion Morley claims that an individual's ` decoding` of TV programmed are not reduced to a direct consequence of social class position. (Agosto de, 2006). It is always a question of how social position, as it articulated through particular discourses, produces specific kind of readings or decoding. (Agosto de, 2006) These readings can be seen to be patterned by the way in which the structure of access to different discourses is determined by social position` (Agosto de, 2006) Therefore, the meaning of text will be constructed differently according to the discourses brought by the reader. (Agosto de, 2006)

Fiske's Theory suggests that people naturally categorized events that take place in their reality in reference to texts they have experienced in the past which means he is suggesting we all create a context for what we are seeing through intertextual referencing. (Fiske, 1992). People tend to believe that genre is based on real life, however, the human mind tends to give real life events context and genre based on those created in texts. This can apply to <https://assignbuster.com/theories-in-audience-research/>

generally speaking, any genre. For example, the horror film, when something super natural takes place in real life people may relate it to a text based on ghosts if an object might randomly fall off a shelf in a supposedly haunted location on a ghost walk, people will witness this in reference to things they have seen in the exorcist or other such films. (Agosto de, 2006).

According to Marxism Theory is a ' simple idea is that the policy process, far from being a rational weighing up of alternatives, is driven by powerful socio-economic forces that set the agenda, structure decision makers choices, constraints implementation and ensure that the interests of the most powerful (or of the system as a whole) determines the outputs and the outcomes of the political system. (John, 1992).

According to Barry the state's function is to protect and reproduce capitalism. Public policies thus reflect the role of the state in trying to regulate the economy and ensure social and political stability. (Barry, n. d.). In other words, the state formulates and implementation policy to reflects the interests of capitalism and the capitalist or the ruling class. (Barry, n. d.). The control over ideas through media and process of socialization on more generally, such as education. This is no dominant ideology compared to Hall theory which is system can be distort. Marxist is a capitalist mode of production and it is concentrated of nature power which is critical and it is overthrow the system. (Barry, n. d).

## **Bibliography**

Barker, M. (2003) ' I have seen the future and it is not here yet.' Paper to ARSRP conference



Ruddock, Andy (2001) *Understanding Audiences: Theory and Method*, Sage: London.

Fiske, J (1987). *Active Audiences*. In *Television Culture* (pp. 62-68). London: Routledge.

Morley, D. (2006). *Unanswered questions in audience research [Electronic Version]*. *The communication Review*, 9(2), 101-121.

Peter John, (1992). *Analyzing Public Policy 1999*. P. 92.